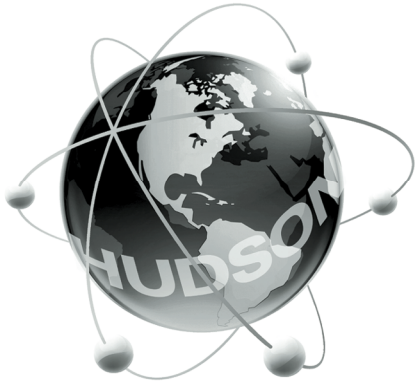


50th Anniversary
1961-2011



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Hudson Institute

The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays, 1942-2009

By Irving Kristol

Edited by Gertrude Himmelfarb

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Panel Discussion of

The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays, 1942-2009

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Wednesday, February 2, 2011



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Ken Weinstein



Good afternoon. I'm Ken Weinstein, CEO of Hudson Institute. I'd like to welcome everyone to today's Book Forum on the newly published *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays 1942-2009*, by Irving Kristol, which has been edited by the redoubtable Gertrude Himmelfarb. The book is available for sale in the back at the discounted price of \$20, and I urge all of you to get one before you leave.

This is a truly remarkable book, one that shows the breadth and the depth of Irving Kristol's thought over some 67 years, which you'll be hearing about shortly. My colleagues and I frankly feel privileged that Hudson Institute is the venue for today's book forum, and I should thank the book's editor, Gertrude Himmelfarb, for giving us this auspicious honor. (Applause.)

We have a truly distinguished panel, who will offer their reflections shortly, but before we get underway I should note that this is Hudson Institute's 50th anniversary year, and to mark this occasion, the Institute has begun a 50th anniversary seminar series, and today's exceptional Book Forum is the second event in this series. This is altogether appropriate as Irving Kristol played a role in the history of Hudson Institute, formally as a trustee and informally as a mentor, teacher, and beloved friend to so many of us here today.

I now have the honor of turning the program over to my colleague and friend, senior fellow Amy Kass, who will moderate the discussion. I know of no one better able to lead our panel. Amy's discerning eye made her, during her three-plus decades in Hyde Park, a legendary teacher of the humanities at the University of Chicago. Amy. (Applause.)

Amy Kass



Thank you, Ken, and thank you all for coming to help usher in this wonderful volume of essays, *The Neoconservative Persuasion*.

Irving Kristol's life story is, in its own way, a very American story: Born into a poor, Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York, he rose to become founder, manager, editor and/or publisher of more magazines than most people read in a lifetime. For us he is rightfully best known for *The Public Interest*, the quarterly journal he co-founded in 1965 with Daniel Bell, where, for 40 years, "transcending political ideology," and sustained by

a “spirit of goodwill and high spirits,” Kristol and his colleagues “influenced the shaping and reshaping of the prevailing modes of discourse in the social sciences.”

In addition, Irving Kristol served as editor-publisher of Basic Books (the publishing house that has brought out *The Neoconservative Persuasion*), as well as Professor of Urban Values in the Business School at NYU, senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and regular columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*, in whose editorial pages, he tells us, neo-conservatism was “reared.” He influenced directly hundreds of people, not only through his teaching, but also through the many internships he sponsored at *The Public Interest* and the guidance he gave to the many young (and not so young) people who sought his counsel. And he influenced thousands of people indirectly, through his brilliant and thought-provoking writings, which addressed seriously yet wittily most of the important questions that arose during his long lifetime—literary, philosophical, sociological, cultural, economic, political, or religious.

“Irving Kristol’s trenchant commentaries educated a generation,” writes Hudson colleague Herb London, who, unfortunately, was unable to join us today. “Smart and clear headed,” he continues, “these articles cut through the thickets of political correctness and sophistry. . . . [Irving Kristol] was not only the father of neo-conservatism, he was a friend and mentor . . . and along with the remarkable Bea Kristol, the intellectual North Pole on the course of our history and civilization.”

The Neoconservative Persuasion, edited by Kristol’s widow, the indeed remarkable historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, comprises approximately 50 of Kristol’s hitherto uncollected essays, spanning seven decades; they are grouped largely in terms of the aforementioned seven disciplines or themes. Especially wonderful, at least for this reader, are the essays from the 1940’s and 50’s, written by the young Irving Kristol. In them one can already detect what Gertrude Himmelfarb calls, in her fine introduction, Kristol’s “distinctive intellectual sensibility—skeptical, commonsensible, eclectic, and at the same time strong-minded and hard-headed,” and, I would add, far-sighted. Included, too, in the volume is an eighth section entitled “Memoirs” where readers may learn from Kristol himself more about his intellectual roots and remarkable life story. Concluding the whole is Ms. Himmelfarb’s own compilation of a complete—and astonishing—bibliography of Irving Kristol’s published writings.

Before introducing our panelists, a word about the title of the volume. As Kristol himself asserts, in the titular essay, written in 2003: Neoconservatism “is not a movement, as the conspiratorial critics would have it [, but, rather,] a persuasion, one that manifests itself over time, but erratically, and one whose meaning we clearly glimpse only in retrospect.” Or, as Ms. Himmelfarb explains in her introduction: “If neoconservatism is not, as Kristol repeatedly insisted, a movement or an ideology, let alone a party, it is something more—a moral perspective deriving from a broad spectrum of idea, beliefs, and sentiments that inform politics, to be sure, but also culture, religion, economics, and much else.”

Our distinguished panelists, all closely familiar with and indelibly marked by Irving Kristol, both the man and his ideas, will illuminate this moral perspective and this broad

spectrum, as they provide those of you who have not yet read the volume with a preview of the treasure trove that is *The Neoconservative Persuasion*. As our speakers are probably well known to most of you, and as you will find more biographical information about them in the handouts at your seat, let me very briefly introduce them in the order in which—and the topic about which—they will speak:

Pulitzer Prize-winning syndicated columnist and political commentator, Charles Krauthammer, our first speaker, will reflect on Kristol's thought about foreign policy.

Director of Hudson Institute's Economic Policy Studies Group, and economic and political columnist, Irwin Stelzer will speak next with reflections on Kristol's writings on economics.

Madden-Jewett Scholar at AEI and noted bioethicist and biblical commentator, Leon Kass, will follow, focusing on Kristol's writings on religion.

Our final speaker, editor of *The Weekly Standard*, William Kristol, clearly the panelist most indebted to Irving Kristol (chuckles), will pick up on subjects or issues not addressed by the previous three.

Gentlemen: please proceed.

Charles Krauthammer



(Applause) Thank you. This volume is a tribute to Irving, a pedagogical document, and a labor of love. The introduction is utterly splendid. And, I think, given its modest origins, it's a great achievement. I was happy to see that it got three pages in a front-page review in the *New York Times Book Review*. About the content of that review, I'll speak a little bit later. Placement is important. (Laughter.)

Irving was a lover of paradox and irony, and I think the greatest of all in his writing is that here is the founder of a school, the father of an ideology—or a tendency or a persuasion—and yet he produced writing and thinking so suffused with intellectual and, I would say, ideological modesty. This is not to say that there are any concessions in his writing, any apologies, any agonizing self-doubt. There's not an ounce of mush. What I think I'm talking about is an appreciation of contingency and the fact that human nature and human society are so complex that they inherently can never be accounted for by any total theory.

As Irving himself puts it in one of his essays, "When I first started writing on conservatism, one of my major points was the need to reconcile Adam Smith and Edmund Burke, the economics of the free market with the political sociology of a

conservative society.” And he goes on to note that in the United States, particularly among the Republicans, this was a very difficult conflict to reconcile, and yet, he says, “Throughout the 19th century in Britain, conservatives had no problem regarding the two with equal respect.”

“How did they manage it?” he asks. “They managed it by being sensible and non-dogmatic, by understanding that ideas that are incompatible in the abstract can often coexist and complement one another in practice so long as the imperial sweep of those grand theories is limited by political wisdom, which is itself distilled from popular common sense.”

And he goes on to say, “In a way, this is the most conservative of all ideas, that there is such a thing as wisdom, and that in the end it is of greater importance in determining good policy than any theory. We live in an age where wisdom is suspect in the eyes of what can only be understood as an over-weaning rationalism.”

This, to me, is a perfect statement of the skeptical, eclectic yet extremely hardheaded view of the world that Irving represented. It’s British, if you like, empiricism—or wisdom—versus continental rationalism. I mean, it’s the perfect counterpart to the French philosopher who says, “Well, of course it works in practice but does it work in theory?” (Laughter.)

Now, when this kind of skepticism—a sharp, analytic mind—is applied to foreign policy, the result is intellectual demolition. When Irving applied himself either to isolationism or, more importantly, to liberal internationalism, he left little standing when he was done. And he was relentless in demolishing the foundations of liberal internationalism, which, generally speaking, is the language of our diplomacy and has been the framework for American foreign policy, with a few exceptions, ever since Woodrow Wilson.

He describes it as a messianic vision of, “subordinating all national interest and national values to the serene judgment of the international community.” And, in effect, he says, to render it unnecessary for any nation to have a vigorous foreign policy of its own. And he adds, “This, of course, is an ancient vision, but it is fair to say that only in our century that statesmen and political philosophers think it a realistic agenda for an unredeemed humanity.”

Irving is relentless in taking on its assumptions: international law, which he describes as “one vast fiction,” the “world community,” which by liberal internationalists is defined as a community committed to a universal definition of law and order and civilized behavior, which anybody over the age of 11 will know does not exist. There might be a community of civilized nations in the West that accepts certain assumptions, and that will agree to take on obligations, but that does not apply beyond.

And, of course, when we have these universal charters and universal organizations, which necessarily include the illiberal ones (to say nothing of the rogue states), what they ultimately do is to hamper the civilized and the liberal because they adhere to the letter

and the spirit of whatever they sign. Left unmolested is the malevolence of those for whom signing a piece of paper means nothing.

Classic example: Yasser Arafat legendarily signed 76 cease-fires with Lebanon in the 1970s. Think about that. That means he broke 75 of them, if not to say the last one as well. And yet this kind of talk about international community, international law is a staple of American foreign policy discourse, and you hear it in this administration to this day.

Of course, its center is the United Nations and the international institutions on which supposedly our security is based. My favorite observation from Irving about this is when he said that he personally prefers the OAS, the Organization of American States, to the U.N. because, he explained, “In the OAS we can only be insulted in three languages, thereby saving translators’ fees.” (Laughter.)

There are a couple of essays written almost 40 years ago, which I think are extremely discerning and prescient. He wrote one at the end of the Vietnam era when the draft was abolished, and he pointed out with incredible prescience how the neo-isolationists who had passed it completely misunderstood what its effect would be. They were thinking that it would be a kind of a restraint on future Vietnams or adventurism, as they would see it.

Of course Irving saw immediately what is obvious today: That it has precisely the opposite effect, that when you have a professional army rather than a conscript army, it allows you to engage in interventions abroad exactly of a kind that would not be tolerated by a conscript army. And in fact you could even argue that the Iraq war and the Afghan war, each approaching almost a decade, would be impossible had the liberal majority of the early 1970s not abolished the draft at that time.

It was a perfect example of Irving’s acute resonance and understanding of the ironies, contradictions, and paradoxes of history. He also spoke about the traps and the effects that adhering to the liberal international niceties and [the] codes [they] impose on us. There’s a particularly telling example of how it makes us lie about what we do abroad and feel somewhat guilty about things we ought not to feel any guilt about. The example he gave at the time in an essay he wrote in 1983 was about the fiction that was used to justify the invasion of Grenada.

Now, wrote Irving, clearly what we had done was to try to prevent a small island from coming under the control of Cuba. Instead, we said that we had been engaged in a rescue mission of medical students. To which Irving then suggested that in the future, what the U.S. ought to do is to establish medical schools in every hot spot on the globe (laughter) so that we would have a ready excuse—a legal excuse—to intervene whenever we felt like it, wherever we felt like it. Which I thought was a brilliant suggestion. Unfortunately it was never adopted.

Irving was quite acute at puncturing the illusions not just about the ends of foreign policy but about the means. In “Conflicts That Cannot Be Resolved,” he takes apart the very notion of “peace process” with a dissection of the difference between mediation and

conflict resolution. Traditionally you mediate. Mediation is about interests, and you try to reconcile them. But instead that has now been overtaken by conflict resolution, which is about psychological attitudes and trying to reform them in order to create trust and understanding, on the assumption that, “this will inevitably mark the end of conflict and the advent of pacific harmony.”

Well, from the choice of adjectives you can see what Irving’s attitude was towards the peace process. And this, written almost 30 years ago, was a very acute way to demolish the notion that we can engage in negotiations, or engage others in negotiations, on the basis solely of changing perceptions to bring about peace. That has been shown to be, for 30 years now in the Middle East, a complete illusion, and Irving was out there 30 years ago telling us it would be.

Now, apart from his incredibly discerning critique of both isolationism and liberal internationalism, you have the question, what was his own foreign policy? Interestingly, it was quite non-ideological, non-dogmatic. Irving may have been the father of neoconservatism, but he was not the father of the current interpretation or understanding of neoconservative foreign policy, understood as being one dominated by a freedom agenda or the principle of democratization. Irving was too skeptical about that, as he was about almost everything.

Nor was he intrinsically interventionist, as the neoconservatives today are accused of being or perceived to be. If anything, he was rather wary of intervention. His foreign policy was an amalgam, a kind of a mutual compromise, mediated by what he would call wisdom—of realism on the one hand, and, on the other, the kind of moralism one should expect from the leader of the free world. Here’s how he put it: “We have too much power to disclaim responsibility for what happens to our friends and neighbors, and as a democratic republic have too much conscience to steel ourselves to utter indifference to the fate of others.”

That to me is quintessential Kristol, marked by ideological modesty, intellectual clarity, and the virtue of being unassailably right, which is why Irving had such an effect on our politics and our history. He was the true public intellectual. In that *New York Times* review by Paul Berman that I referred to earlier, the review concludes with a faux lament that Irving never achieved the greatness he could have, because eschewing the path of the theoretical and the academic, he did not, alas, become (among others) an Irving Howe. (Laughter.) My reaction precisely.

Instead, of course, Irving chose another path, alas, in which he shaped a 30-year conservative ascendancy which began with Reagan, affecting Reagan’s economic policy, domestic policy, social policy and foreign policy; left an intellectual legacy (as we see in this book), rich and enduring; founded a movement (or a tendency, if you like); inspired a school of thought; created legions of disciples, many of whom are here today; and changed the world profoundly.

Quite a life. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Irwin Stelzer



How would you like to follow that act? To follow Charles and precede Leon and Bill is not exactly my choice of places, but I'm stuck with it.

As Amy said in her introduction, it's difficult to separate the man from the ideas. Can you hear me in the back? Too bad. (Laughter.) Irving's style, his person had a lot to do with the acceptance of the ideas. He was gentle. It was reflected in his insistence

that modern capitalism cannot be the red-in-tooth-and-claw Darwinism that many of those who profess to be of his political persuasion would prefer.

He always reminded us that the Schumpeterian gale of creative destruction so admired by conservatives had costs as well as benefits, that the rewards that went to the creative were often accompanied by the pain that befell the destroyed, and that the latter, the people who lost out due to creative destruction, were as worthy of our attention as were the winners. Sinatra might sing, "Here's to the winners," but Irving always had room for concern for the losers, without sacrificing the dynamism of capitalism that he always pointed out had done more to improve material well-being than any other system in the history of man.

His kindness I think also increased his ability to triumph in the battle of ideas. He didn't leave the corpses of his intellectual opponents strewn across the battlefield on which some argument was raised. They might be pricked and they might be wounded, but their dignity was intact. Charles says he was relentless, and that's certainly true, but he would encase his riposte in a kind of humor for which he was famous, and it always left an adversary room at some later point to recant with dignity.

Some conservatives prefer to bluster and make themselves the center of attention in the debates over neoconservatism, with their ideas being an ancillary product while they are center stage. In Irving's case, the ideas were always center stage and his person was always the ancillary aspect of what he said—open-minded, good will toward people with different points of view. I think he reveled in the intellectual arguments about the shape and future of capitalism, not in proving himself smarter and more aggressive than those with whom he disagreed.

So, his famous disagreements with Maynard Keynes, for instance, contained in "Toward a 'New' Economics?" included his observation that Keynes was a giant in the history of economic theory, and that that is beyond question. Now, of course the rest of us poor economists didn't do so well in Irving's essays. "We are people who do not know how to think in moral terms," he said. We are "too likely to be indignant, outraged and contemptuously dismissive" of supply-side economics, because, "what is the point of an

economist's hard-won expertise in sophisticated theory if policy can be reduced to such plain terms?" (Laughter.)

"Because," he said, "a mastery of advanced economics has been so crucial to the enterprise, economists have secured the mantle of true scientific elite, often incomprehensible, always indispensable." He added that "contemporary economists are uneducated in the world of business, in the world of real economic activity"—his emphasis. "They are trained instead in the world of economic analysis. It is a distant relation which easily warps one's perspective."

He went on. There's a lot more. He pointed out that when he set up *The Public Interest*, there were no economists on the staff, and they didn't have any until, quote, "we matured." Now, that could have put me off doing this paper, but I refused to be demoralized by it. (Laughter.) I forgive Irving, as he always forgave my sillier ideas.

I remember talking to him about the virtues of competition in the electric utility industry and how it kept electric rates down by reducing the workforce. And he said, what happens to the laid-off workers, most of whom have been with the company for decades and are unsuited for other employment? Do you really prefer a few cents off your electric bill compared to their suffering? That was pretty scary because I didn't have an answer.

I said, well, you've always said it's dangerous to attempt to directly limit compensation, and I agree with you, but I ignored the nuance. If you read Irving, read the parentheses: he said in "What is a Neoconservative?" "We find that equality proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence includes the right to become unequal, (within limits), in wealth," and he meant it. Look at all the parenthetical qualifiers there—his substitute for Bea's footnotes. (Laughter.)

Taken as a whole, the economic essays reflect two major themes: an attempt to save capitalism from capitalists and from their apologists in the universities and the think tanks, and an attempt to leave us with a body of commentary on which we can draw as we move forward in life, away from primal certainty and towards what he calls the "skeptical pragmatic meliorist tone" of *The Public Interest*.

Now, I think it's not unfair to say that Irving was only partially successful in the first effort of persuading the pro-capitalists, or the capitalists, to save capitalism. He tried mightily to persuade the businessmen he met and their acolytes to abandon the chortling Darwinism with which they justify their incomes, pointing out to them that, "This doctrine was self-defeating in a democratic age since it did not offer much solace or hope to those (perhaps the majority) who, not being among the fittest, had the worst chance of survival."

Note again the limits of what he was saying. The divorce of the defense of capitalism, he felt, from the moral components of the Judeo-Christian tradition, meant that naked economic ambition could now speak its name. Throw in libertarian, hedonistic defenses of consumerist capitalism, what Irving called "substituting the worship of the Sears

Roebuck catalogue for the worship of the golden calf”—there was no Neiman Marcus catalogue when he wrote this so he had to have the more modest version—and you have a defense of capitalism by the business community that did it more harm than the attacks of its critics.

That defense remains in place. Nothing is to interfere with profit maximization, not the uninternalized costs of production and consumption, not the inequalities created, not the demeaning nature of seeking government protection, not the threat to market capitalism posed by the excesses of some of its leading practitioners. “We do God’s work,” the head of a leading investment firm said, as the unemployment rate hit double digits and foreclosures swept the country.

Now, it turns out that some people bought homes they couldn’t afford, and the question if you’re profit-maximizing, is whether it would have been better to have them and their children left on the mean streets of the inner cities. I don’t think Irving would have thought that. Yes, if the banks would renegotiate these loans, it might be better, but the banks are now divorced from the people to whom they gave mortgages, and that was, therefore, not in the cards.

In his essay “No Cheers for the Profit Motive,” Irving concluded, “Looking back, one is hard-put to say who has done more damage to capitalism, its apologists or its critics.” Now, he knew he couldn’t rely on the defenders of capitalism to defend it. When businessmen who profess to have read his essays—and, worse still, probably had—slapped him on the back, he says, and urged him to go back to the academy and carry the flag for capitalism by explaining what a splendid thing the profit motive is, he wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*, “Since such occasions do not lend themselves to philosophical discussion, I smile weakly, mumble something unintelligible, and change the subject as quickly as possible,” which is a typical Irving approach.

In my view, he just didn’t win that fight, at least not yet. If capitalism is to be saved from what’s now called the “Beijing consensus,” the role will have to fall to others than the defenders of capitalism to explain, as Irving always tried to explain, that Adam Smith was not about profit but about the working of incentives within a moral framework that leaves room for the profit motive but does not deify it.

While he didn’t succeed completely in persuading businessmen how to defend capitalism, he did succeed in laying the basis for, let’s call it, the way we’re going to look at the problems that face us.

Start with the hopes for a revolution led by the Tea Party. Irving always had a soft spot for populists, perhaps because he saw them as hard-working folks making their way in a world without tenure. I remember when I was preparing this talk, Cita reminded me of Irving’s delight every year when the Rolling Thunder bikers came to town, not an academic gown in their midst, only tattoos and American flags. It appealed to him a great deal.

At least a decade before the Tea Party populists appeared on the scene, Irving pointed out that such movements in America tend to be anti-big business but not anti-capitalist, which is a very big difference, and that they arise because the structure of our polity and economy make it possible for vox populi to find expression, and that populist conservatism could turn out to be the last best hope of contemporary conservatism. That's in "The Right Stuff."

So far so good, but many, especially those in the right-to-life movement, he pointed out, have a tendency to be fanatically determined to make the best the enemy of the good. So keep in mind one of Irving's conclusions lest you lose heart when failing to clear the first hurdle on the path to undoing the fiscal and regulatory damage inflicted on our economy in recent years. Note: the nice thing about "in recent years" is it's not a number. So you can read it anyway you choose. "There will surely be defeats ahead . . . [many] of them self-inflicted," he wrote. And remember, too, his typically realistic and modest goal of reducing the relative size of the public sector by growing the private sector.

Move on to current controversies over economic policy. Irving opposed deficits for the very pragmatic reason that the spending they finance doesn't produce the promised growth, and that sooner or later you have to pay for them with taxes. So far, so Tea Party.

But he pointed out that reducing government expenditures in a depressed economy, quote, "creates too many problems." And once again, parenthetically, that "a ruthless dismantling of the welfare state is in any case unthinkable." I think the Tea Party-ers would not find those views congenial.

Deficits matter but not enough to force a stifling of growth or to prevent tax cuts that just might stimulate the economic growth that will bring deficits down. It's all a question of magnitudes, of timing, of moving from economic analysis to economic policy.

I should add here that Irving's dismissal of the efficacy of deficit spending, of Keynesian demand-side management was quite persuasive. But it's something we might want to reconsider periodically because lurking in that criticism is the admission that there are times when deficits are not a bad idea and when eliminating them at a stroke is a bad idea.

He bowed in Keynes' direction by relying on economic activists to drive the economy. And he said, if only we could identify which ones they were we would know whom not to tax. (Laughter.) But these activists are not really very different from the animal spirits that Keynes referred to. So I think if you take Keynes, add a bit of Bagehot, some Adam Smith, some Irving Kristol, you might get a synthesis of what really would make good economic policy as we go forward.

One more point before I close: Irving might have made a wish that he wished he hadn't wished. He was unattracted by mathematical economic models of the sort that the quants brought to Wall Street when they modeled risk, forgetting the risk that everybody else was doing the same thing, and you would therefore at some point end up with markets

with only sellers. So Irving called for weight to be given to human motivations, intentions, aspirations.

Unfortunately, his wish is being answered by a new breed who would have us consider gross national happiness instead of gross national product. And by behavioral economists whose work would benefit mightily from a reading of Kristol. So if some in the audience want to take that message back to where some of you just came from, that's fine with me. (Laughter.)

I have to conclude with a recommendation for those who don't feel inclined to read the economic essays—although I recommend them to you. If you must skip them, skip them all, and read three pages. Read “Vice and Virtue in Las Vegas.” This is clearly a winner. Irving says that legalized gambling, which he opposes—however, he played a lot of poker, so he calls that “gaming” instead of gambling—(laughter)—he says it would reduce the crime statistics if we legalized it.

Now note, he didn't say it would reduce crime; it will reduce the crime statistics, which is probably what all those people were worried about. This is a moral issue, one of several that no one is willing to discuss seriously because, he says, such a discussion goes against the spirit of the age, which would have trouble recognizing a moral issue if it ran over one on Main Street in broad daylight. There is more, little of it to do with economics, which is why the Vegas essay is so important.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Leon Kass



These remarks are entitled, “Irving Kristol’s Theotropy.”

I am honored to participate in this book forum, celebrating the appearance of this wonderful feast of Irving Kristol’s previously uncollected writings, a volume that displays the enormous range and subtlety of Irving’s mind and the remarkable array of subjects illuminated by his wit and wisdom, delivered always

in Kristol-clear and pithy prose.

With a thinker as wide-ranging as Irving Kristol, readers and reviewers will likely concentrate on that aspect of his work which most appeals to their, almost unavoidably narrower, interests, tastes, and concerns. Thus, in her review in *The Jerusalem Post*, Ruth Wisse’s Irving Kristol is an indefatigable warrior in the battle of ideas over the worth of Western civilization, whereas James Q. Wilson’s Irving Kristol (*Wall Street Journal*) is a careful social scientist, who delights in using hard data to explode utopian visions and to challenge well-meaning but foolish public policy proposals. By contrast, writing in the

New York Times, Paul Berman's Irving Kristol is a curmudgeonly dogmatist, given to tirades and simplicities, who defines foolishness as anything that disagrees with him. It is an old story: what A says about B usually says more about A than it does about B. In choosing to speak, therefore, about Irving Kristol's essays on religion, I too am reflecting the biases and prejudices I bring to the book.

But I am led to these essays not merely by personal interest, or by my wish to emphasize deeper layers of Irving's thought usually ignored by people who care only for politics and public policy. I am led to these essays by Irving himself, who begins his "An Autobiographical Memoir" (dated 1995) with a remarkable confession: looking over a lifetime of his changing opinions—from neo-Marxist, to neo-Trotskyist, to neo-socialist, to neo-liberal, to, finally, neo-conservative—he observes: "One 'neo,' however, has been permanent throughout my life, and it is probably at the root of all the others. I have been 'neo-orthodox' in my religious views (though not in my religious observance)." Although unable to explain how this came to be, he nonetheless affirms its significance: "There was something in me that made it impossible to become antireligious, or even non-religious, though my subsequent intellectual commitments kept trying to steer me in that direction. I was born 'theotropic,' and not even my dismal experience of a decadent Orthodoxy could affect this basic predisposition." Although Irving says little about the nature of his "theotropism"—what exactly is his orientation toward the divine?—and although what he does say he puts only in the negative ("impossible to become non-religious"), Irving wants readers to understand the primacy and centrality of this theological orientation for his entire life—as well as its being "neo-orthodoxy," that is, held with a "degree of detachment qualifying my commitment."

It therefore should come as no surprise that the longest of the eight sections of *The Neoconservative Persuasion* is not about neo-conservatism but about "Judaism and Christianity," comprising nine essays (the most in any section) written over a span of more than 50 years. Most of the essays are not, strictly speaking, theological, but sociological and political: "The Political Dilemma of American Jews"; "Liberalism and American Jews"; "Christmas, Christians, and Jews"; "Why Religion is Good for the Jews"; "Taking Religious Conservatives Seriously"; "A Note on Religious Tolerance"; and "The Political Stupidity of the Jews." The analyses here are penetrating and the problems he addresses have, if anything, become only more serious since the essays calling attention to them were first written. All of them show Irving to be a friend of religion—not only Judaism, but also Christianity—who welcomes the American resurgence of serious religiosity as a necessary corrective to the excesses and restlessness of an aimless secular culture. But for someone looking for Irving's explicitly theological ideas, these essays are largely unrevealing. There he writes about religion rather in the spirit of Lord Melbourne, who said of himself, "While I cannot be regarded as a pillar, I must be regarded as a buttress of the church, because I support it from outside." (Laughter.)

Not so for the two earliest essays in this section, to which I am therefore especially drawn. They were published in *Commentary* in September 1947 and January 1948, when

Irving was but 27 years old and only recently returned from his army experiences in Europe, where he also personally witnessed the destruction of European Jewry. Both essays are profound meditations on theological subjects, the first on Christian theological roots of Anti-Semitism, the second on the power and limitations of current Jewish theological writing. In perhaps the deepest and most searching essay in the entire collection, “The Myth of the Supra-Human Jew: The Theological Stigma,” Irving first documents how Christian writings make the Jews out to be at once both a supra-human people—in covenant with God, the source of the savior, and witnesses to the advent of Christ—and also a sub-human people in league with the Devil, an embodied projection of unlawful lust and unsanctioned desire, whose persecution brings purification and glory to the persecutors. From there, the analysis proceeds layer by layer, showing, for example, how Jews are hated also for being in league with God, a people holier than thou, whose existence provokes guilt but whose persecution also arouses guilt—leading to the wish that these people should just “die off.” Finally, he shows how, with the waning of religion and the coming of nationalism, the stigma is secularized, and the stateless and wandering Jew is now seen as a cosmopolite, an anti-nationalist traitor to his country, a stranger not only to his host nation but a stranger on the earth altogether—once again, anything but a normal human being, always made to answer for the anxieties of the age, whether religious or secular. Man’s self-hatred becomes Jew-hatred. “The Jew,” Irving writes, “is made over into the looking-glass of humanity. Men warp the glass in every possible way so that their image shall come out over-large and handsome. But it is a perverse glass, perverse as fate itself, and occasionally men see themselves diminish furiously, threaten to disappear. Then they smash the glass.”

In the second essay, “How Basic is ‘Basic Judaism’? A Comfortable Religion for an Uncomfortable World,” Irving comes closer than anywhere else to articulating his own religious thought. His point of departure is an influential book, *Basic Judaism*, recently published by Rabbi Milton Steinberg, written he says, “in good part addressed to me, as one of those who ‘are groping to establish rapport with the Jewish tradition, standing at the synagogue door, ‘heart in, head out.’”” I find this essay immensely interesting, partly because I share Irving’s gropings, mainly because his reflections are at once timely and timeless. Irving is suspicious that the search for “basic Judaism” may be “an escape from intellectual responsibility, from responsibility to one’s beliefs,” in which the search for common ground produces only vague and watered down teachings that reflect the atrophy of the religious sentiment altogether. Still, he gladly enumerates the positive insights that contemporary Jewish theology has to offer “people like me.” The list is impressive, as are Irving’s own wonderful embellishments of each item.

1. The non-theoretical, existential character of Judaism: “Judaism is less a religious system than a system of living religiously. . . . Judaism thinks in the categories of life; it does not try to adapt life to the categories of thought. . . . If we think of religion as an eternally continuing dialogue between man and God (and this is already a Jewish conception), then the language of this dialogue is life—not prayer, meditation, contemplation, ecstasy, good deed, or anything else, but all of life.”

2. Little concern with proving God’s “existence”: “Judaism believes in God because—well, to begin with, because Judaism has a covenant with God. Does one sign a covenant with a non-entity? (Laughter.) And if stupid lawyers, mainly apikorsim

[heretics, unbelievers], cannot read the handwriting, what does that prove? . . . It all comes down to the fact that Judaism has faith in God, and accepts a belief in God for the good and sufficient reason that it believes He exists. Is this arguing in a circle? (Laughter.) Well, then, it is arguing in a circle. But it is a circle of words, and outside this circle lies life, man—and God.”

3. The truths of its teachings are largely immune from skeptical philosophical or scientific attack: “Man finds religion in his life, he ‘proves’ it with his life; life is a dialogue with God. . . . The modern world has suffered much damage by permitting the scientists to appropriate the vocabulary of meaning and authoritative discourse as their own and only their own. . . . ‘Love’ . . . has no place in the scientific vocabulary . . . nor does ‘God.’ Why that should give everyone—except the scientists!—an inferiority complex with regard to their beliefs in Love and God is one of the wonders of our times.”

4. Jewish monotheism rests not on ideas of “Nature” or “Being,” but on “the moral order in the history of the world”: “The world is no play of phenomena and noumena, matter and spirit; it is the daily life ready to be made sacrament, prepared for an act of redemption.”

5. Despite the existence of evil, affirmation of the world and its delights: “There is no place for wanton sensuality, but neither is the human body considered corrupt or degraded. In the old ghettos on a Friday night the pious Jew would perfume himself and comb his hair before he went to prayer, would fervently chant the Song of Songs at the table, and after the Sabbath supper, the best meal of the week, he generally went to bed with his wife. It was right to do this on the Sabbath, because the union of husband and wife gives us an image of the union of God with the shekhina [manifestation of God].”

6. The centrality of action, responsibility, and community: “The freedom of man’s will has never been seriously challenged within Jewish thought. On the contrary: not only is man’s responsibility for himself assumed, but also his responsibility for his fellow men, and for God Himself.”

7. No vicarious salvation: “Man is responsible for his own fate, for his community’s fate—and for God’s fate. The world was created for the sake of those who can exercise the power to choose God; if God is not chosen, His purpose is wrecked. Each instant is filled with all time insofar as the moral act, the act of redemption, is concerned. . . . Not a blinding angel come to supersede the world; the world is not to be superseded at all, but to be redeemed, that is, consummated. . . . ‘Not thine to finish the task, but neither art thou free to exempt thyself from it.’ It is from this conception of man’s divine responsibility that springs the stubborn hope, the blind optimism, that has been so frequently observed (and misinterpreted) in Judaism.”

Quite a list of positive insights, most powerfully put—and I have hit only some of the high spots—worthy of the attention of all who harbor, or who long to harbor, a theotropic disposition. Moreover, I suspect that these insights—for which Irving here credits Jewish theology—are not far from the guiding principles of his life and life’s work: his sensible focus on life as lived, rather than as object of theory; his confidence in the wisdom learned from life, unshaken by science or other intellectual systems; his moral but not moralistic understanding of the world and our task in it; his devotion to making the world a little bit better rather than a little bit worse, without succumbing to messianic schemes of hope and change; and his embrace of life—this life—in all its richness and glory.

But I have left out the end of the essay—where young Irving tells the reader why he is not, so to speak, “converted” by Rabbi Steinberg’s or anybody else’s “Basic Judaism,” why his “orthodoxy” is—and remained—only “neo.” The grounds are, of course, intellectual: these comfortable teachings are “too good” for the present world; they ignore the spiritual disorder of the present age; worst of all, they fail to feel the “horror that breathes into our faces” which “is the realization that evil may come by doing good—not merely intending to do good, but doing it”: “That is the trap of social action that the movements of progress and enlightenment of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries fell into; and we, whether “best minds” or ordinary citizens, haven’t the faintest inkling how to get out. Universal literacy has led to popular demagoguery and mass mania; modern medicine finds unparalleled opportunities unleashed by the atomic bomb; the shortening of the working day goes hand in hand with the breakup of the family and the derangement of the sexual sentiment. A century of incessant effort to the building of a humane life-on-earth has led with fantastic ease to a victorious life-in-death.”

Judaism, Irving notes, “looks blankly at the current trends toward a theology of crisis.” It needs—we all need—to face perhaps for the first time, not only the question “why Jews in the world?” but even what he calls the semi-blasphemous question, “why men in the world?” In a word, modern life has made urgent profound questions for which the genuine insights of Jewish orthodoxy are insufficient answers. Irving, never willing to allow wishful or comfortable thinking to pass for truth, remained in religion—as in everything else—a “neo.” By which I mean he was at bottom and to his core an independent and intransigent thinker, a man looking for clarity, and—fortunately for us—a man eager to share most generously what he discovered. Thanks to the efforts of his soul mate Bea, we are blessed once again to be the beneficiaries of his wisdom. (Applause.)

William Kristol



Let me begin by thanking the Hudson Institute for hosting this event and Ken Weinstein and John Walters in particular for putting this on. I also want to thank Amy Kass for putting together such an excellent panel, at least the first three members of it. (Chuckles.) It’s an honor to be on this panel and really a pleasure for me personally since it brings back so many fond memories of lunches and dinners and brunches that my parents enjoyed with either all

of these people and their spouses or some different subdivisions of them, depending on who was in town. Sometimes Susan and I would join them, so these are very fond memories.

I was reminded, sitting up here and looking at Irwin and Charles in particular, of one incident that I do mention in the preface, which is the eulogy that I gave after my father died.

I think my parents and the Stelzers and the Krauthammers had been out to brunch in a very noisy restaurant, I guess, and my father had some hearing loss in his late years.

In this case, I think it was pretty noisy and he didn't pick up all the conversation and he said at the end of the brunch to Irwin and Charles that I can't hear what you're saying, so I make it up. (Laughter.) And sometimes you disappoint me. I don't think he would be disappointed by what any of you have said today, though maybe he would be, you know? (Laughter.) I mean, who knows? No, he wouldn't be certainly. (Chuckles.) These have been excellent presentations.

I was also reminded listening to Leon's very interesting account of those two very interesting essays that my father wrote in his late twenties, I guess, for *Commentary*, on Judaism, of one essay I'm also particularly fond of: the essay he wrote — the talk he gave actually in Jerusalem in 1999 that then was printed in *Azure* — on "The Political Stupidity of the Jews." I just love the title so much. (Laughter.)

When my mother was deciding what to call this collection of essays, it was pretty obvious that it should be—(laughter)—it was obvious it should be *The Neoconservative Persuasion*, but I myself—(laughter)—I myself was in favor of, "The Political Stupidity of the Jews and Other Essays." (Laughter.) I think it would have sold well, you know? (Laughter.) Maybe not to all the people you want to be buying the book, but—(laughter).

Actually I want to follow in a sense in Leon's path, and rather than talk about neoconservatism or my father's views on America or social policy—all of which are very interesting—(chuckles)—and are reasonably accessible, I would say, to people and have been fairly widely discussed—I'd like to simply talk about a few of the essays themselves.

Because I think one thing that struck me reading this book of essays—and again, these are essays that, I think as Amy explained, had not been collected in the four volumes of essays that my father published in his lifetime—the fourth of those, actually, mostly consists of essays from the first three, so, let's say, three or four books of essays in his lifetime. All of these, except for the autobiographical essay, were heretofore uncollected.

And what was striking about them was actually how interesting they are just as essays. And many, I think, really are very much worth reading just as essays. I mean, if my father—if neoconservatism had never gotten anywhere, if Jack Kemp had decided to become an NFL commissioner and Ronald Reagan had lost the 1980 election and, all kinds of other things had happened in the world and if people didn't think neoconservatism had helped change American conservatism and American politics and American history and if my father weren't particularly well-known for his role in that, I really do think these essays themselves would be—or are—worth reading just as excellent and interesting meditations and analyses of literature, of religion, of political philosophy, of society.

So let me just mention four of them, I think. Amy mentioned in her introduction that she particularly liked, I think she said, the essays from the '40s and the '50s, two of which Leon discussed. I also was very struck by those, especially the ones from *Enquiry*, this little magazine that my father started with a few friends in 1942 and had eight issues and closed when he and his friends went off to the war. I noticed from the cover it sold for 10 cents. (Laughter.) I'm sure it sold like hotcakes. (Laughter.) A journal of independent radical thought—or was it socialist thought? I don't remember.

In the very first issue, my father has an essay called, "The Quality of Doubt," a review essay, quite short, less than a thousand words I would guess, a review essay of Auden, W. H. Auden's, *The Double Man*, a book of poetry that had come out that year, which included many of Auden's most recent poems. I guess the most famous one was perhaps, "A New Year's Letter," of 1941.

This is the first essay in the book and it was written when my father was 23 years old. He quotes, actually, a little—a bit of "A New Year's Letter" right at the beginning of the essay: "All our reflections turn about / A common meditative norm / Retrenchment, Sacrifice, Reform."

That's Auden, but I thought, that's quite current actually. (Chuckles.) "Retrenchment, Sacrifice, Reform." You know, I sent this to Paul Ryan, the chairman of the House Budget Committee—(laughter)—and suggested that he use this as a little tag, you know, when the House Republicans unveil their budget. (Laughter.) It would be a very elegant way to do it I think—W.H. Auden endorses House Republican budgets. (Laughter.) Retrenchment, sacrifice and reform. Paul did not think this was a terribly good idea, but . . . (laughter).

But the essay actually is, is really, I've got to say, pretty amazing and pretty relevant in a deeper sense than the House Republican budget. My father praises—he liked this book of Auden's poetry. He very confidently proclaims at age 22—(chuckles)—that Auden's early verse was "rashly positive, didactic, clever, facile and possessed of a nasty Stalinist bent." (Laughter.) I mean, Auden is then, I suppose, one of the, you know, two or three most famous poets alive. (Laughter.)

But my father goes on, "The undercurrent of questioning uncertainty, often still, but always there, became dominant only late in the last decade. 'A New Year's Letter' from '41 is the organized product of these growing doubts and its moral subtlety, receptivity and sensitivity is close to brilliant. The bitterly acquired political wisdom of a generation seems to flourish in the pen and stagnate in the poet. Of course, being poetry, the problem is only stated, but a good statement is half a solution."

And then my father explains Auden's modification of his previous political certainty or dogmatism. "The Quality of Doubt" is the title of my father's essay and is what he praises Auden for. And he concludes the essay, "The juxtaposition of personal and impersonal private existence and public politics, its ensuing dialectic self-analysis"—there was still a little bit of Trotskyism there I would say—(laughter)—"with its

confession that truth is equivocal—all of this is a vitiation of animal confidence and vigor, a symptom of approaching age. It cannot be erased by a repetitive moral earnestness, which serves only to blur the perception of the actual.”

That’s really a fantastic sentence, actually, I’ve got to say, and I think it’s so true, the degree to which people do think that a repetitive moral earnestness—(chuckles)—is adequate to blur the perception of the actual.

My father goes on, “The crisis in conscience is deep and enduring and any renewal of heart will have to accept it as a fellow traveler.” So any renewal of heart or spirit would have to accept this crisis of conscience and the quality of doubt. On the other hand, “to elevate doubt into a political program is distinctly impracticable, having the common consequences of accepting the status quo as a sure good contrasted to all kinds of future imaginable evils.”

It is striking how “neoconservative” this is—this combination of praise for the quality of doubt, and doubt about simply resting with a quality of doubt—(chuckles). But also the criticism of repetitive moral earnestness as a substitute for coming to grips with the actual problems, how much that forecast, I think, 65 years of future writing and how much it stands on its own is a very interesting meditation, not just on Auden but on politics and human endeavors in politics.

Ten years after that, in *Commentary* magazine, my father in 1952 wrote a review essay of Leo Strauss’s then-new book, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. The essay was called, “The Philosopher’s Hidden Truth.” And this, too, is a remarkable essay. I know a little bit more about Strauss than—(chuckles)—about Auden, so I probably in some way maybe appreciate this one more.

Strauss is very, very little known at this point, has just gone to the University of Chicago two or three years before, which is where he really became famous. This is before the publication of the book that I think made Strauss well known, *Natural Right and History*, which is also the book, not accidentally I would say—(chuckles)—that is most accessible and lays out what is generally taken to be, sort of, the general Straussian view of ancients and moderns and natural right and history and all those topics.

The book my father here is reviewing is a book—if any of you has looked at *Persecution and the Art of Writing*—that consists of three long and extremely dense essays on Maimonides, Halevi, and Spinoza and an introduction that is actually mostly on Farabi’s Plato, something I’m sure many people here have been just reading up on this morning. (Laughter.) And then the title essay, “Persecution and the Art of Writing,” which is itself quite a complicated essay, which concludes by basically showing that the main reason for the art of writing is not persecution. So there are these five chapters. It’s a very difficult book.

And my father praises it, explains, I think, very lucidly what Strauss saw. He writes right at the beginning that “it is Strauss’s thesis that few if any of the great books of

philosophy and political philosophy written before the French Revolution inaugurated the era of journalism can simply be read. No matter how vigorously the student or the instructor is exhorted to do so and no matter how earnestly he applies himself, they have to be studied—and in a special way, for if they are truly great, it is probably their intention to conceal as well as to reveal and they do not yield their secrets easily.”

Now, that’s a very clear, but a fairly straightforward, I guess you’d say, statement of what Strauss argues in the book. And it’s not particularly surprising, I suppose, that my father would have seen that.

But what’s most striking is that this is a book that does not discuss, never uses the phrase, I believe, *ancients and moderns* and is really not the Strauss that we think of as, you know, what *Straussianism* is about. And my father saw, just on the basis of this book and maybe a couple of other essays of Strauss’s that he had read—though there weren’t that many at that point in English—that after summarizing what Strauss says about Maimonides, he praises Strauss and he says this:

“If in time, the victory goes to Professor Strauss,”—the victory against his critics and how to read Maimonides and other questions of interpretation and understanding —“he, Strauss, will have accomplished nothing less than a revolution in intellectual history and most of us will, figuratively at least, have to go back to school to learn the wisdom of the past that we thought we knew. It is fortunate for us that the lessons will be rather more exciting and more daring in their implications than we remember them.” And then there’s this funny last line. “And it is a consolation of sorts to know in advance that for those of us who fail to learn this art of reading, provision has been made”—(laughter).

But I mean, to see that this was a possible intellectual revolution—a revolution in intellectual history—on the basis of *Persecution and the Art of Writing* is, I think, a little uncanny or at least extremely—(chuckles)—perceptive and, again, a sense—just an indication of how interesting this essay is and I think how interesting his attempt to come to grips with what he saw, in a way, as the crisis of modernity and Judaism and intellectual life in general in the West in the late ’40s and early ’50s was.

The third essay I want to mention is one that I actually hadn’t remembered ever reading, I’ve got to say, until going through the essays for this book, which is the essay on Tacitus in 1956 in *Encounter*, the British magazine that my father edited for most of the ’50s.

It’s a defense of Tacitus against, I guess you’d say, modern historians who seem to have downgraded Tacitus’s—I take his word for this because I know nothing about this but—who had sort of downgraded Tacitus’s account of the Roman emperors and who, in fact in particular had become defenders of the Roman emperors whom Tacitus describes not in a moralistic way—(chuckles)—but nonetheless as tyrants and, to some degree, moral monsters.

And of course the whole period Tacitus describes is one that can create only despair. It's pointless to try to oppose the tyrants and pointless—and ignoble—to try to help them or work with them.

And my father really appreciates Tacitus's incredibly stern and, I guess, unsentimental—(chuckles)—I would say, view of history, but also a view my father claims in this essay that is not unwilling to pass judgment on these tyrants and their enablers, but simply also not terribly hopeful of what could be done—well, not too hopeful at all, I guess, about what could have been done about it.

There is a lot of learning in this essay, which—this essay is also very short, maybe 1500 words—deployed very lightly. But it's a very interesting account of the history of what people thought about and said about Tacitus, beginning in the Renaissance when Tacitus is sort of rediscovered and becomes very famous and then what's called Taciteanism and the use of it by various thinkers and actors.

So my father says of Napoleon, “Naturally preferring the glory of tyranny to its gore, registered an indignant protest that in the annals one found ‘nothing save accusations and men accused, persecutions and the persecuted and people opening veins in baths’.” And that's Napoleon's dismissal of Tacitus's failure to appreciate the greatness and glory of the early Roman Empire, I suppose.

And then my father closes the essay, “We have lost the habit of judging tyrants so harshly, for we are more attentive to their historical roles, their objective tasks, than to their human meanings.” And that's an objection, I believe, to Marxism and various forms of Hegelianism and Marxism that justify tyranny because of its historical role in certain periods. “It is the supreme virtue of Tacitus that as we read him, the mists of History”—capital H—“the mists of History fade away and we see only persecutions and the persecuted and people opening veins in baths.”

And it's a really interesting, I would say, account of Tacitus, again, written by my father, who I don't think, you know, had a perfect command of Latin—(chuckles)—not having studied that at City College, though I think he had taught himself a little. And he had taught himself a little, but it's really very interesting both in the lightness of which he wears the learning, but also the actual defense of a certain view of how to think about politics in an unsentimental but also unapologetic way, in terms of the evils that beset many polities and especially tyrannies.

Finally, I wanted to call attention to a very late essay, “The Right Stuff.” Irwin mentioned it briefly. It was published in 1996 in the British journal *Prospect*, written by my father after his last volume of essays, *Neoconservatism: The Autobiography of an Idea*, had come out in 1995. So never, obviously, collected until this volume.

It's interesting because he steps back—it's for a British audience, so he doesn't presume an excessive knowledge, I would say, of the ins and outs of American politics for the last two or three years and steps back and sort of tries to offer a broader perspective, which is

actually quite interesting, I think, and useful. It has a fantastic beginning that Richard Starr and I were laughing about at the office the other day for reasons you'll see in a minute.

It begins, "I remember the day very well, back in 1956,—40 years before this essay was written—when I arrived at my office at *Encounter*—of which I was then co-editor—and found on my desk an unsolicited manuscript by Michael Oakeshott. This, I thought, is the way every editor's day should begin"—(laughter)—it is the way our days begin at *The Weekly Standard*, of course—(laughter)—"with an over-the-transom arrival of an essay by one of the finest living political thinkers and certainly the finest stylist."

"The manuscript was called 'On Being Conservative'"—and my father continues—"and I read it with pleasure and appreciation. It was beautifully written, subtle in its argument, delicate in its perceptions, and full of sentences and paragraphs that merit the attention of anthologists for decades, perhaps even centuries, to come. Fortunately, this essay is to be found in his book, *Rationalism in Politics*. I say 'fortunately' because, after loving every line of the essay, I sat down and wrote to Michael, rejecting it." (Laughter.)

And then he says, "I forget what disingenuous circumlocutions I invented for that letter." (Laughter.) "But the truth is that, while I admired the essay immensely, I did not really like it." (Laughter.) This was so striking, I remember discussing this with Richard and maybe Claudia and others at the magazine, the great confidence that you could just reject an essay because you don't like it, you know? (Laughter.) What if it's really an excellent essay that you happen to dislike? This cheered me up and it's certainly guided us at *The Weekly Standard*—(laughter).

But actually I think it was Richard who pointed out that this was extremely brilliant of my father and, in a way, characteristic of his great practical intelligence. This seems at first to be a kind of very daring acknowledgment and bold assertion that, you know, he just accepts and rejects essays because he doesn't like them, which is not usually what editors do. They usually say, we're swamped in material this week and it doesn't quite fit—(laughter)—and we have other essays on the same topic and all this.

But in fact, of course, it's very clever in a way to put this on the record because now every single person who was rejected by my father at *Encounter* and *Commentary* and *The Public Interest* and God knows where else—(laughter)—can feel that, well, it was just because he didn't like it, you know? (Laughter.) They can think it was just so arbitrary, the way he edited those magazines. So this is actually a very brilliant, I think, way of making your rejected authors feel better about themselves.

That wasn't the main point of this essay. (Chuckles.) But I liked that part. And the essay is a very interesting account of American politics in the mid-'90s and mostly a defense—a qualified defense, of course—of what he calls this new populist conservatism. He says it has its internal problems. There are plenty of other essays in this book, incidentally, that worry about populism or criticize simple-minded populism.

But what struck me about this essay was how much it resonates today. He says, “The United States shares all the evils, all the problems to be found among the Western democracies, sometimes in an exaggerated form, but it is also the only Western democracy that is witnessing a serious conservative revival that is an active response to these evils and problems. The fact that it is a populist conservatism dismays the conservative elites of Britain and Western Europe who prefer a more orderly and dignified kind of conservatism.” It dismays a lot of the elites of America too, I would say—(laughter)—the conservative elites in America.

“It’s true that populism can be a danger to our democratic orders, but it’s also true that populism can be a corrective to the defects of democratic order—defects often arising from the intellectual influence and the entrepreneurial politics of our democratic elites. Classical political thought was wary of democracy because it saw the people as fickle, envious and inherently turbulent. They had no knowledge”—the classical thinkers—“of democracies where the people were conservative and the educated elites that governed them were ideological, always busy provoking disorder and discontent in the name of some utopian goal.”

“Populist conservatism is a distinctly modern phenomenon and conservative thinking has not yet caught up with it. That is why the exceptional kind of conservative politics we are now witnessing in the United States is so important; it could turn out to represent the last best hope of contemporary conservatism.”

I think that’s a very interesting—both very relevant today 15 years later and a very interesting example, if you will, of a certain neoconservative kind of thinking—extremely respectful of classical judgments and thought, but willing to rethink those judgments in light of new circumstances and, in this case, to come to a guardedly friendly view of populism—of a certain kind of populism in the current political and cultural environment, rather than sort of mechanically applying you might say something that was written a hundred or a thousand years before—2,000 years before—without taking account of new conditions on the one hand, but without also simply forgetting the wisdom of these older books and older experiences on the other.

I’ll close just with one more thought, having recommended these four essays, a comment on—someone mentioned to me when they saw I was doing this panel: I hope you’ll explain how it was that, you know, your father was a liberal who was mugged by reality. And I thought I would say just a word about that.

That sentence I don’t think he ever wrote actually. It’s part of the oral tradition. (Laughter.) Of course, the Jews believe that the oral tradition has the same status as the written tradition. (Laughter.) One of my minor problems with aspects of the Jewish tradition, but anyway, it was a quip that my father made and it was reported widely and then just repeated for 30 years and he never corrected it, so I suppose he was happy enough with the quip.

I think honestly, though, it's a little misleading and it actually shows his modesty, which I think a couple of people have referred to. I mean, plenty of liberals were mugged by reality in the late '60s and the early '70s and a lot of them chose not to realize they'd been mugged—(chuckles)—or shrugged it off and ascribed it to some root causes or other problems that they didn't want to deal with then.

The more intelligent, I'd say, types who didn't feel they could simply ignore reality—I'll just quote a wonderful phrase of Mike Scully, who was a friend of my father's who died very young, unfortunately. And Mike—I think he was reviewing a book by people who were neoliberals in the early '80s. So these were liberals who were more sophisticated. They understood that liberalism had gone astray, but they still wanted to be liberals. Mike Scully said that neoliberals were liberals who had been mugged by reality and refused to press charges. (Laughter.) Which I think is a really brilliant formulation of so much that one sees actually in politics and in life in some ways. (Chuckles.)

I know my father very much liked that formulation of Mike's and I do think one thing one has to say is that my father was not afraid to press charges and he was willing in the real world of politics and of foreign relations, international relations, and of social and cultural battles in which we live, to press charges appropriately.

But he also always did so, as Amy suggested, I think, in a spirit of good will and high spirits and always retaining, a certain quality of doubt and a willingness to rethink his conclusions, even though they were forcefully pressed as circumstances demanded. Thank you.

Q&A

MRS. KASS: Well, as I anticipated, we have a very short amount of time left. So, rather than ask questions of my own, let me open the floor for questions from the audience. May I ask you, please, to identify yourself, and, again, because of lack of time, to forego making a long comment and simply ask a question.

Q: Alan Levine, American University. Given that Irving published three or four—however you count it—books of his essays, I wonder if the panelists have a comment about why he might have chosen not to republish these essays.

MR. KRISTOL: I mean, I can take this. He was not, you know, vain about his work and didn't keep a complete catalog of everything he had written and didn't think it was required for the future of humanity that all of it be published in a complete, you know, works in 19 volumes. So I think, to some degree some of these essays, he probably hadn't thought about that much in a while and he figured that people could find them if they wanted to.

But more precisely I do think, I mean, the first two collections were, *On the Democratic Idea in America*, which really is all about America and American democracy and the

progress or decline of the democratic idea in America. The second volume, *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, was focused, as you'd expect from the title, on the kinds of topics that Irwin spoke about. So there really was just the neoconservative volume—*Reflections of a Neoconservative* in 1983—and then the final volume, which assembled mostly essays from the first few volumes that he assembled.

And I assumed there were the usual constraints that publishers had about the amount of material and a certain desire that publishers, I've noticed, do have for topicality, which probably meant that they didn't think the Tacitus essay would be a huge bestseller—(laughter)—or the essays on Judaism in the late '40s.

It has had the fortunate effect, I guess you would say, that this book—I mean, I honestly believe this and in terms of the pure quality and intrinsic interest of the essays, not simply their interest for showing you what an intelligent person was thinking in 1979 about a certain topic, but in terms of their intrinsic interest—this book actually has as many interesting essays and lasting essays as the other books.

Q: (Inaudible identification). Who were some of the people who influenced your father as a young man and what did he read?

MR. KRISTOL: Well, that's a—I mean, I have to—I don't want to be the spokesman here for my father. He says in the preface to *On the Democratic Idea in America*, which is his first collection of essays, that he wants to make a special tribute, I think he says, to two thinkers from whom he learned the most: Lionel Trilling and Leo Strauss. And I think they, for him, were towering figures. Trilling, in particular. It was his ideas on liberalism and its limitations, I guess. And for Strauss, a real rethinking of the whole tradition of political philosophy.

But he read very widely and was influenced by lots of people. And I would say—someone asked me—last night at a dinner this came up tangentially with a lot of young people in Washington—what to read, you know, what should they be reading in the evening. And I basically said that I don't know, but I recommended including history, philosophy, literature, and poetry.

And I do think my father read much more of all of those fields than people probably realize and probably less, frankly—I don't want to shock Irwin here, but—he wasn't really always up to date on the *American Economic Review* and—(laughter)—so I would say that he was certainly, you know, he was obviously widely read.

I guess the one other thing I'd cite, just since I can cite him rather than my own thoughts, he says, he has one very funny judgment at the end of an essay he wrote for *Partisan Review* in 1984. I think it was some kind of symposium. And he said he has become more conservative over the years. He acknowledges and doesn't just acknowledge—he's happy to acknowledge it. And he says, part of becoming more conservative—and he lists a bunch of authors whom he has come to prefer—where is that, that list—which is quite amusing, I thought.

Here it is, in the essay, “Reflections of a Neoconservative,” in any case, yeah, he prefers Jane Austen to Joyce or Proust; he prefers T. S. Eliot’s later, Christian poetry to his earlier poetry; he prefers Tocqueville to Max Weber, Aristotle to Marx, the Founders to any political scientists since then—(laughter)—and there are a few others.

Q: (Inaudible identification). I wonder if you could give us a little more insight into his intellectual odyssey—(inaudible)—obviously he was brought up in the tradition of the New York intellectual circle—(inaudible)—America view of anti-Nazism, anti-fascism, anti-communism—(inaudible)—and he took a quite different path to reach neoconservative thought.

MR. KRAUTHAMMER: I’m not sure I heard the last part of that question. There’s a little bit of a malfunctioning microphone. It’s the vast left-wing conspiracy again. (Laughter.)

Q: Kristol reached neoconservatism through a path not—(inaudible)—typical of an American populist, you know, one through anti-fascism, anti-Nazism or anti-communism—that kind of thing. He went through a neo-Trotsky, neo-Marxist phase. So, I wondered if you could describe what was the intellectual odyssey that brought him to neoconservatism.

MR. KRISTOL: I can say a word about that. It’s nice, I mean, it was true that he was a Trotskyite obviously and sort of a Marxist, I guess. But one shouldn’t exaggerate the length of these phases, you know. (Laughter.) I mean, he was finished with that basically by 1944 or ’45, certainly by the time he came back from the war, certainly by the time he was 27 years old and wrote the essay that Leon quoted from. Then he was a liberal anti-communist from the very beginning after the war.

So I think actually his foreign policy views at their core were your basic anti —strong— anti-communism. In 1952, he famously got in trouble for an essay in which he dismissed Joe McCarthy as a vulgar demagogue, and said that at least the American people know that he’s an anti-communist and they wonder whether some of the leaders of American liberalism are as well. That was a very politically incorrect thing to say and it got him into a fair amount of trouble, and he went off to Britain for six or seven years. (Laughter.) And not because of that, but—(chuckles).

So I don’t know that it was that unusual, you know. He himself says in one of his late essays in this book that he certainly was a participant in the anti-communist effort for 40 years and wrote about it and, God knows, published many essays about it. He didn’t find it particularly intellectually challenging, in a sense. I mean, the Soviet Union was an evil empire, to use the phrase. It needed to be resisted; strength was the best way to resist it.

There are obviously tactical questions about where you fight and when you don’t fight and how you fight and what you do about friendly dictators and all that stuff. But I think he was, at his core view, as the quotation that Charles read shows, a strong believer in

American strength and a believer that America stood for more than just America, but then with, you know, prudential judgments about how much we could do elsewhere around the world.

MRS. KASS: Charles and Irwin, do you want weigh in on this?

MR. STELZER: These questions are all circling around one larger question. How did Irving happen? I had that same reaction when I read Bea's collection of her brother's essays. How did these people happen? I was booking bets at that age on basketball games while Irving was strolling through Union Square reading the classics. How did someone like Irving Kristol happen? If you read the bare vitae sheet—you know, educated here, born there—he didn't happen. The question they're asking—what did he read, what did he think is really the broader question, how did he happen?

MR. KRISTOL: Well, not that there's anything wrong with betting—(inaudible, cross talk)—on the NBA games. He enjoyed—as you said—gambling or gaming as they like to say in Vegas. He discusses this a little bit in his autobiographical memoir. I do think they had good education back then even in the public schools of New York and certainly at City College, though most of the education he had—as he says—was not formal, but informal, from his friends.

It was the vibrant New York intellectual life, which has been much written about and to some degree justly, perhaps, mocked a little bit. Nonetheless, you do see this reading the Auden piece from 1942 or the pieces from *Commentary* in the late '40s. And New York intellectual life at the time was at a generally higher level, I think it's safe to say, than much of American intellectual life has been since then. And he had a very inquisitive mind. I do think that's the case.

I mean, I guess I would say there were plenty of very, very smart intellectuals and very fine writers and essayists, obviously, of his generation and of the generation slightly before and after. And I really wouldn't claim that he was necessarily better than a lot of them. I do think he was always willing to be contrary and he always had real questions about whatever the dominant orthodoxies were of the day. Thus the neo-everything. And I do think that led him, perhaps, a little more into different paths than a typical New York intellectual of the '40s or '50s.

MR. KRAUTHAMMER: To go back to your question about the nature of his political evolution, I agree with Bill—and this is sort of starting in the 1950s. He was a mature, young man who already was an anti-communist liberal, a Cold War liberal. So, his trajectory is really not that different from a whole generation of intellectuals who saw American liberalism stray, if you like. It was reacting to the 1960s, to the Vietnam War that took it away from its roots. You can argue that—I mean, this is a whole generation again—who started with Truman and Kennedy, particularly regarding their view of foreign policy.

You could argue that they continued on a straight line while the liberals lost heart, faded away and betrayed their own principle, which was—as stated by Kennedy and Truman—a defense of liberty around the world and a realization that history had thrust the United States, which was not seeking its position, as the only country that could be the guarantor of freedom. And that was an important enough value to America—itsself founded on liberty—that a whole generation of formally Cold War liberals were determined to pursue it against what was then called the prevailing liberalism and in the end had to adopt a new name.

And I think Irving in the end gave up and accepted neoconservatism because that's what it was. But I think you can make a strong argument that really it's the liberals who faded away. And I think what makes Irving unique was his turn of mind. Well, first of all, he was slightly ahead of the others—he could see it coming. You see that in the early essays, the prescience that Bill had talked about. In some of his essays, he saw it coming and he said it probably better than anyone. But also, he did it with a kind of humor, equanimity, lack of vitriol that made him almost unique.

I mean, these were churning, wrenching times. Irving was completely unapologetic and hardheaded in his writing and thinking. And yet, he did it in a way that was—I don't want to overemphasize it—but utterly charming in the end. And his acceptance of the mugging idea is an example of that kind of lightheartedness.

I would just add that I guess when I heard that, I thought the definition of an unreconstructed liberal is two guys who walk along the street and see somebody lying in a gutter all beaten up, half dead, after an obvious assault. And one liberal says to the other, we have to find the man who did that, he needs help. (Laughter.)

MR. KASS: Well, not having known Irving in his formative years, I wouldn't hazard an explanation. But the request for an explanation, whether in terms of things he read or the circumstances he experienced, is, although natural, also misguided: one cannot explain genuine genius. I mean, Irving Kristol is a man the likes of which you're not going to see again, and you're not going to write a formula for his previous production or recurrence.

And part of his distinctive gift— and everybody has, in a way, emphasized it—what Charles calls his equanimity and grace is part of what, in other conferences, one would call the *philosophical disposition* —the kind of detachment, the kind of interest in the truth—which is rarely combined with the kind of engagement with worldly affairs that you see in Irving. And that's what is—it seems to me—remarkable.

He could hold his own, I think, with the best of thinkers. He read and respected their writings, but he kept his own counsel. He thought things through for himself. And the amazing thing for me is, here is a person who has never given up the “neo,” never has given up the skeptical cast of mind, who nevertheless throws in his lot with the world of human affairs, making argument after argument as if these things really matter, and, by the way, never getting angry as the partisans do.

So this is really the marvelous combination of a kind of real philosophical disposition with a kind of practical engagement with affairs, and choosing to make his life exactly at the intersection of theory and practice. And I think that life is inexplicable, but one should be very grateful for the blessing of it.

MRS. KASS: Are you suggesting that neoconservatism is inexplicable?

MR. KASS: Well, if you mean by this—

MR. STELZER: If you knew him better, you'd understand—(laughter).

MRS. KASS: More precisely, you seem to be suggesting that neoconservatism is an oxymoron.

MR. KASS: Yes, in a sense, if you mean by the “neo”—and taking Irving's understanding of what made him a “neo”—always a certain detachment, always a certain critical distance. Yet conservatism, if it's one party amongst many, is not detached but engaged, and its success depends upon attachment, loyalty, and commitment—that's the strange thing. Irving manages to hold both together. The people who run with his conservatism but not his “neo” don't have that critical distance and, as several people have pointed out, become often the worst enemies of the causes they are trying to serve.

MRS. KASS: Please.

Q: Doug Feith of the Hudson Institute. Could you give us some thoughts on the relationship between Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz?

MRS. KASS: Short answers, please. (Laughter.)

MR. KRISTOL: Norman is 10 years younger so that was a great—and Norman was extremely upset once or twice in my presence when people thought—even mistook one for the other or, in one case, thought my father was younger than Norman. (Laughter.) And they were quite different, obviously, in their backgrounds, honestly, and quite different in their temperaments and, you know, respected each other.

But I actually think when you read this book—Norman wrote fantastic essays on many things too and it would be interesting to compare them. But for all the similarity of conclusions in certain ways on certain topics, I'm also struck by the differences in their manner and approach. And, I think, the intellectual history of each of them would be quite different, as well, if one looked at that.

MRS. KASS: Okay, we have time for one more question.

Q: Ken Masugi. I was wondering whether you could name moments at which Irving Kristol was surprised by a political event—either pleasantly or unpleasantly and what he might have learned from being so surprised.

MRS. KASS: Do you have a particular political event in mind?

Q: That's their challenge—(laughter)—to come up with.

MR. KRISTOL: Well, I mean, he says in the essay—"The Neoconservative Persuasion" in 2003—that he himself had thought and wrote this at the end of the autobiographical memoir in 1995 that neoconservatism had done its task—a very important task—of changing American conservatism and influencing American politics, but he thought it had sort of went its course. I can't remember the exact phrase he uses—something like that—and it had been absorbed into conservatism. And in 2003, he admits error, which is nice. He does that a few times, actually.

He actually admits error in another essay I noticed in skimming through the book—I forgot about this—that he had originally supported the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts—(laughter)—thinking that, you know, you could do some useful stuff on the national level and it's not entirely inconsistent, of course, with the American tradition.

Washington had been for a national university, but then his more—he doesn't put it this way, but I'll put it this way—his more simple-minded conservative friends in this case who simply thought—are you kidding? Government? I mean, it's going to be a mess—they were right, actually. And he says in this essay, he underestimated the decadence, really, of the artistic and to some degree intellectual communities in the U.S. So he was too good-natured in that respect. That was one error.

But in 2003 he says, you know, I was wrong to say that—apparently wrong—events just turned out differently. The neoconservatism didn't get absorbed into conservatism. It's more of a distinct strain that emerges at certain times and certain crises. And it reminded him, I think, of something else he said in that earlier essay, which is you can't predict the future and no one knows exactly when certain persuasions become more relevant or less and how they do—or how they can get distorted for that matter too.

But I do think that was a surprise to him—the reemergence of a distinctive neoconservative view to some degree on foreign policy but also, in fact, on domestic policy. And I do personally think, having read through these essays again, that one could make a case that this, now, is a neoconservative moment. Not in the sense that there's a neoconservative answer to the questions we're facing, but that everyone has the sense that more orthodox forms of conservatism or more orthodox forms of non-conservatism, for that matter.

It doesn't mean one always has to be less conservative. It just means that thinking anew—this is a moment for thinking anew, as Irwin suggested, I think, in political economy, but also in terms of some of the cultural and social issues. And in fact, we're seeing debates now among so-called neoconservatives in foreign policy.

So I think he had a lively appreciation of the limits of any one to predict events and the limits of any—certainly of any — ideology, but even of any persuasion to fully capture at any one moment the full scope of choices, and that, therefore, as future events happened, one had to think in a fresh way.

MR. KRAUTHAMMER: I would just say that in my presence, Irving was never surprised, always amused. (Laughter.)

MRS. KASS: It's just about time for us to adjourn. Before doing so, Bea Kristol would like to say something.

Gertrude Himmelfarb ("Bea Kristol")



GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB: I just want to thank all of you. I'd like to thank our hosts, the Hudson Institute, who organized this event, and particularly Grace Terzian and Amy, who chose this panel, and therefore contributed to what was, indeed, a very interesting, almost scintillating discussion.

And of course, to the panelists and to the discussants. I thought I hadn't understood Irving's essays.

(Laughter.) But God knows I had read them often enough. I had even thought about them. But I was really, really delighted to find that I had much more to learn more about them. And in fact, as I listened to all of you, I took notes—(laughter)—about the essays—no, not very detailed notes, I must say—but notes about the essays that you brought to my attention.

Charles, "Conflicts That Can't be Resolved"; Irwin, "Vice and Virtue in Las Vegas," which has always been one of my favorite essays; Leon, "The Myth of the Supra-Human Jew: The Theological Stigma"; and Bill, of course, on "The Political Stupidity of Jews." (Laughter.) I thought about that. I thought about your comments. And I'm tempted to reread, revisit all of these essays, although in speaking to you now I think I'm going to resist that temptation. I couldn't quite get there.

But in any case, I do want to thank all of you in Irving's name—and I think in this case I can properly, you know, use that name and also my own—for a very, very interesting session, a very provocative one—mind-provoking and also, if I may say so, heart-warming. So thanks to all, thank you all of you. (Applause.)

MRS. KASS: And thank you, Bea, for preparing the volume. Indeed, our greatest thanks really are owed to you. And, again, let me thank all of you, our panelists and audience, for your interesting remarks, your presence here today, and for your evident appreciation of that singular individual, Irving Kristol.

Speaker Biographies

Leon R. Kass, M.D., is the Madden-Jewett Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the Addie Clark Harding Professor Emeritus in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. He was the Chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics from 2001 to 2005. He has been engaged for more than forty years with ethical and philosophical issues raised by biomedical advance, and, more recently, with broader moral and cultural issues. His widely reprinted essays in biomedical ethics range from in vitro fertilization, cloning, genetic screening, and organ transplantation to aging research, euthanasia, and steroid use in sports, and his books include *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (Simon & Schuster, 2003) and *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics* (Encounter, 2002).

Charles Krauthammer has written a syndicated column, since 1985, for the *Washington Post*, which appears in 250 newspapers worldwide, and he appears regularly on Fox News' Special Report with Bret Bair, as well as other television news programs. For three decades, his influential writings have helped frame the very shape of American foreign policy, and won him the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary. In 1978, Krauthammer, a physician by training, left medical practice to help direct planning in psychiatric research in the Carter administration, and began contributing essays to *The New Republic*, which he later joined as writer and editor. In 1984, these contributions won him the National Magazine Award for Essays and Criticism, the highest award in magazine journalism. From 2001 to 2006, he served on the President's Council on Bioethics. He is President of The Krauthammer Foundation and Chairman of Pro Musica Hebraica.

William Kristol is Editor of *The Weekly Standard*, which, together with Fred Barnes and John Podhoretz, he founded in 1995. One of the nation's leading political analysts and commentators, Kristol regularly appears on Fox News Sunday and on the Fox News Channel. Before starting *The Weekly Standard*, Kristol led the Project for the Republican Future. Prior to that, Kristol served as Chief of Staff to Vice President Dan Quayle during the Bush administration and to Secretary of Education William Bennett under President Reagan. Before moving to Washington in 1985, Kristol taught political science at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

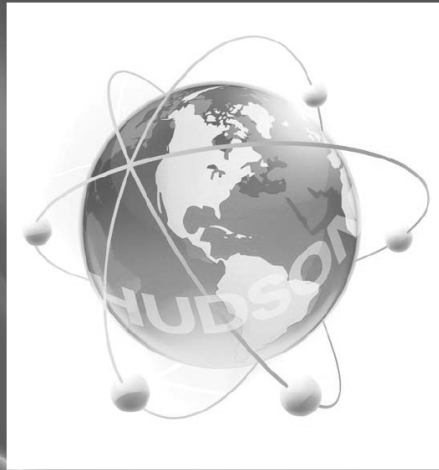
Irwin Stelzer is a Senior Fellow and Director of Hudson Institute's Economic Policy Studies Group. Prior to joining Hudson Institute in 1998, Stelzer was a Resident Scholar and Director of Regulatory Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute. He also is the U.S. economic and political columnist for *The Sunday Times* (London), a columnist at the *Wall Street Journal Europe*, and a contributing editor of *The Weekly Standard*. Stelzer founded National Economic Research Associates, Inc. (NERA) in 1961 and served as its President until a few years after its sale in 1983 to Marsh & McLennan. He also has served as a Managing Director of the investment banking firm of Rothschild Inc. and a Director of the Energy and Environmental Policy Center at Harvard University. Stelzer has been a member of the board of the Regulatory Policy Institute (Oxford) and an advisor to the U.S. Trade Representative.

Amy Kass (moderator) is a Senior Fellow at Hudson Institute. Now Senior Lecturer Emeritus, for thirty years she was an award-winning teacher of classic texts in the College of the University of Chicago, where she was also a Senior Fellow in the John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy. She is the editor of four books, most recently *Giving Well, Doing Good: Readings for Thoughtful Philanthropists* (Indiana University, 2008). Kass served on the National Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities, as well as on the Council of Scholars of the American Academy of Liberal Education, and as a consultant on American history and civic education at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Kenneth Weinstein (introduction) is President and Chief Executive Officer of Hudson Institute. He oversees the Institute's research, project management, external affairs, marketing, and government relations efforts. A political theorist by training, Weinstein has written widely on international affairs for leading publications in the United States, Europe, and Asia. His latest book (with Paul Aligica) is *The Essential Herman Kahn: In Defense of Thinking* (Transaction, 2009). He has been decorated with a knighthood by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, as a Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. He serves on the National Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Weinstein has served, as well, on numerous bipartisan commissions and task forces, including the Bipartisan Policy Center's Iran Task Force co-chaired by former senators Dan Coats and Charles Robb, and the Guiding Coalition of the Project on National Security Reform.

Gertrude Himmelfarb, a celebrated intellectual historian, is the wife of the late Irving Kristol. Known in private life as Bea Kristol, she has written extensively on intellectual history, with a focus on the Victorian era, as well as on contemporary society and culture. In addition to editing *The Neoconservative Persuasion: Selected Essays, 1942-2009* (Basic Books), she is the author of fourteen books, including *Victorian Minds* (1968) and *The Moral Imagination: From Edmund Burke to Lionel Trilling* (2006). Kristol is the recipient of many awards and honorary degrees, and is a Fellow of the British Academy and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She has served on the Council of Scholars of the Library of Congress and the Council of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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